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ABSTRACT

Quantitative and qualitative research methods combining case study methodology with numerical analyses were used to investigate the desegregation of Hispanics in selected school districts. Survey responses were analyzed in the areas of English language instruction, special education programs, discipline, grade retention, and staffing patterns. It was concluded that: (1) Hispanic isolation from blacks will probably continue to increase; (2) Hispanics are becoming more isolated from whites and, in many tri-ethnic communities, Hispanic segregation from whites and blacks is increasing in unpredictable patterns; (3) the juxtaposition of bilingual education vs. school desegregation as an either/or option is detrimental to the implementation of school desegregation in Hispanic communities; and (4) at present rates, Hispanics will become the most segregated racial group in the 1980's. (Author/MK)

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Hispanic Segregation Trends in School Districts with Hispanic Enrollment Above 5% and Exceeding a Total Student Enrollment of 3,000

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Background

In speaking about the interface of the Hispanic community and desegregation, we must guard against overly simplistic assumptions that the Hispanic community, as a racial and national origin group, is coterminous with the Spanish bilingual community. Inasmuch as a small percentage of our Hispanic community is bilingual, merely documenting the effects of school desegregation on bilingual education and ESL programs not only misses most of our community, but clouds other analyses focused on the issues.

The controversies surrounding desegregation in our Hispanic community not only affect bilingual education, but also the general welfare of Latinos well versed in the English language, as well as those in special programs, whether gifted/talented or SLD.

The issues confronting our educators range from problems of definition (e.g., how are Hispanics defined--black, white, Latino, or other?) to local politics and staunch racism. Likewise, the solutions are varied and quite vulnerable to local machinations.

Aspira Study

While it is difficult to concisely summarize our completed study, it is fair to say that we tackled many issues through both qualitative and quantitative research methods by combining case study methodology with that of descriptive, but numerical analyses.

Sample Populations

The study involved four sample populations of school districts, each the subset of the larger, derived from the OCR biennial, elementary and secondary school surveys at the district and school level (OS/CR 101 and 102) for the years 1968, 1972 and 1976. The following were selected:

1. All school districts with enrollments exceeding 3,000 and with 5% Hispanic population or above for each of the years 1968, 1972, and 1976. The analyses involved both a longitudinal examination for districts in OCR data base with data in each of these years (n = 247), as well as cross-sectional analyses for each of the three years above (n > 600);

2. a purposive sample of the ten largest school districts in the country (all but one lie within the above category);

3. a select sample of 20 tri-ethnic school districts geographically representative of the larger sample; and

4. two ethnographic case studies of and East and West Coast districts designated as Eastville and Westville.

Data Gathered

Inasmuch as the large sample of school districts included nearly 80% of all Hispanic students in the country, yet represented less than 5% of the nation's school districts, the sample was treated as a census. In these districts Hispanos were (1976) the single largest minority group, representing 23% of the total student population. This sample lent itself to quantitative analyses of survey responses in the areas of English language instruction; special education programs; discipline, as measured by rates of suspensions and expulsions; grade retention, as measured by rates of high school graduation and number of dropouts; and staffing patterns. The second and third samples above were also quantitatively determined, while the ethnographic sample lent itself to careful on-site participant observation and archival documentation.

Findings

1. Five indices of segregation were used: the isolation index E(H,M,50%); three forms of the R index (Coleman's R); and the Dissimilarity index. Our findings indicate that the isolation index increased more between 1972-76 than from 1968-72. Overall, 63% of the districts were more greatly segregated in 1976 than in 1968. When this is normalized for the loss of non-Hispanic enrollment in the larger school districts, segregation still seems to have remained virtually the same.

2. Examining these Hispanic trends by region, the South remains the most segregated and the Southwest the least segregated.

Segregation, as measured by the E index, increased in all regions but the East Coast, and continued its increase in the Midwest for the average Hispanic and non-Hispanic student as measured by R(H,NH).

3. Segregation of Hispanos from Blacks in 1976 exceeded segregation in 1968, even after compensating for the proportion of Blacks in the school systems.

4. Isolation of Hispanos from whites in both predominantly minority (50%) elementary and secondary schools increased from 65% in 1968 to 74% in 1976.

5. Nationwide, more than one-fourth of all Hispanic students may have limited English speaking ability (LESA), which is inferred from the use of a language other than English at home, while fewer than 2% of all non-Hispanic students also had non-English backgrounds. Thus, nearly 84% of all LESA students are Hispanic. As segregation increased, so did the number of Hispanic students needing English language instruction. In relatively high segregated systems, 57% of the Hispanos need English language instruction.

6. The outcome of bilingual education programs within school desegregation are inconsistent. Bilingual education has been supported to maintain segregation in some districts, made economically unfeasible in others, while being yet strengthened in some court remedies and totally disregarded in others.

7. This reported incidence of handicapped conditions among Hispanos is higher in those school districts with the greater number of Hispanos, even more than the level of school district segregation. In many cases, these were school districts in moderately segregated school systems.

8. The Hispanic community will not support school desegregation if it is perceived to threaten bilingual education programs.

9. School desegregation has improved school practices for most Hispanos, including those not enrolled in bilingual education.

10. Overall, suspension rates were highest for Hispanos in moderately segregated districts, where the highest percent of Hispanos attend. This was also true for school retention rates.

11. In other respects, high segregated districts meant less Hispanic enrollment in gifted and talented programs, lower in programs for the learning disabled Hispanic child, and a higher rate of mental retardation as compared to low segregated districts.

12. School segregation affects staff as equally as students. Hispanic professional staff is as segregated as are Hispanic elementary and secondary school students.

13. Blacks are more segregated than Hispanos between schools and across school systems, but segregation of Blacks has decreased more (or increased less) than segregation of Hispanos in the school systems. Over the period studied (1968-1976) the level of segregation for Hispanos and the level of segregation for Blacks converged.

14. In most tri-ethnic communities, where Hispanos, Blacks and Whites constitute a large percentage, Hispanos have become more segregated from Whites or Blacks, and in many school districts they have more greatly separated from both.

15. Court ordered desegregation plans are more stringent than voluntary plans and seem to occur in districts which are most racially disparate and where the history of ethnic conflict is high. However, when the local community is against school desegregation it will do whatever it can to maintain racial separation. At times, this may be reflected in segregated classrooms within "desegregated" schools.

General Conclusions

1. Present projections indicate that Hispanic isolation from Blacks will probably continue to increase.

2. Projections also indicate that Hispanos are becoming more isolated from whites.

3. In many tri-ethnic communities, Hispanic segregation from whites and blacks is increasing in unpredictable patterns.

4. The juxtaposition of bilingual education vs. school desegregation as an either/or option is detrimental to the implementation of school desegregation in Hispanic communities. This need not occur.

5. At present rates, Hispanos will become the most segregated racial group in the 1980's.

Limitations of Study

1. The major limitation to the study is its descriptive nature. The report describes segregation trends for Hispanos, but no attempt to explain factors contributing to segregation. For instance, it has not attempted to establish a cause/effect relationship controlling for school practices and level of segregation.

2. The Black comparison group was as that for Hispanos; that is, the school districts were selected on the percentage of Hispanos. Consequently, only one-fourth of all Blacks are included in this sample, while nearly three-fourths of all Hispanos were included.

Needed Further Analysis

1. Further investigation of the relationship between segregation and school practices, beyond descriptive statistics and contingency tables.

2. Examination of segregation trends for a larger sample of Blacks.

3. More intensive studies of segregation in specific regions (e.g., the South and Midwest).

4. Studies of total segregation of Hispanic students, including between-district segregation.

5. Continued investigation of segregation trends using data for 2978 and subsequent school years.

6. More intensive examination of tri-ethnic composition and segregation patterns.

7. Examination of school districts with 5% Hispanic enrollment or above, but under 3000 total enrollment.

Policy Recommendations

1. School desegregation plans should distinguish the needs of Blacks from those of Hispanos, as well as from those of other racial minorities.

2. Desegregation plans should adhere to existing State and Federal guidelines for bilingual education. An attempt should be made to avoid dispersal of NES/LESA students to such an extent that bilingual education at each grade level is rendered economically impractical.

3. With school desegregation, Hispanic students are less likely to come into contact with a supportive learning environment. In many cases this would imply the hiring of additional Hispanic staff.